

Message Text

SECRET

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21

ACTION EA-06

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 L-01 H-01 INR-05 PM-03 PRS-01

SP-02 OES-02 EB-03 NSC-05 NSCE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00

OMB-01 SAJ-01 /046 W

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P R 090520Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8597

INFO AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

USLO PEKING

S E C R E T MANILA 11802

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PBOR, RP, VN, CH, TW

SUBJECT: SPRATLY ISLANDS DISPUTE

1. DURING CALL WHICH ADMIRAL GAYLER AND I MADE ON PRESIDENT MARCOS MORNING AUGUST 7, I ASKED MARCOS IF HE WOULD TELL US THE STATE OF HIS DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS TO RESOLVE THE SPRATLY DISPUTE.

2. MARCOS BEGAN BY REFERRING TO HIS RECENT DISCUSSIONS WITH PHAM HIEN CONCERNING THE VIETNAMESE CLAIM TO THE AREA. HE SAID THAT, BEFORE AGREEING TO ESTABLISH DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH HANOI, HE HAD ASKED PHAM HIEN ABOUT VIETNAMESE INTENTIONS AND HAD RECEIVED CATEGORIC ASSURANCES THAT NEGOTIATIONS ON THE SUBJECT COULD BEGIN AS SOON AS EMBASSIES ESTABLISHED. MARCOS SAID HE REGARDS THIS AS A FIRM SRV PLEDGE TO PURSUE THE VIETNAMESE CLAIM BY PEACEFUL MEANS, BUT "AS YOU WELL KNOW," VIETNAMESE

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PROMISES ARE NOT NECESSARILY BINDING FOR ALL TIME.

3. TURNING NEXT TO CHINA, MARCOS SAID HE HAD RAISED SUBJECT DURING HIS AUDIENCE WITH MAO TSE TUNG. HE SAID HE HAD POINTED OUT TO CHINESE THAT CURRENTLY, GRC OCCUPIED ITA ABU, GOP OCCUPIED SEVEN (SIC) SMALLER ISLANDS, AND (AT THAT TIME) GVN OCCUPIED OTHERS. HE ASKED WHETHER PRC INTENDED "TO CHASE CHINESE NATIONALISTS OUT OF ITA ABU." TENG SHIAO-PING HAD REPLIED BY POINTING OUT THAT NATIONALISTS STILL OCCUPIED TAIWAN, WHICH WAS OF MORE IMPORTANCE TO PEKING THAN ITA ABU. AFTER PURSUING SUBJECT FURTHER, MARCOS SAID HE WAS ASSURED BY TENG THAT, FOR THE TIME BEING, STATUS QUO COULD CONTINUE EVEN THOUGH PRC REGARDED ALL THE ISLANDS AS CHINESE. CHIAO-KUAN HUA HAD INDICATED THAT TALKS ON THE SUBJECT COULD BE PURSUED BY GOP AMBASSADOR AFTER HIS ARRIVAL IN PEKING.

4. SUBSEQUENTLY, MARCOS SAID, PRC HAD INVITED ROMULO TO GO TO CHINA FOR DISCUSSIONS. AT FIRST, MARCOS HAD ACCEPTED, BUT THEN DECIDED THAT "ROMULO WOULD BE SPENDING ALL HIS TIME IN CHINA," AND THEREFORE THE INVITATION HAD FINALLY BEEN DECLINED, WITH THE SUGGESTION THAT IT BE RETURNED TO AMBASSADORIAL LEVEL AS FIRST PROPOSED.

5. I ASKED MARCOS HOW HE EXPECTED PEKING WOULD REACT TO A SITUATION IN WHICH HANOI AND MANILA ARE NEGOTIATING ABOUT THE "CHINESE TERRITORY" OF THE SPRATLEYS. HE SHRUGGED AND SAID THAT THEY SEEMED TO ACCEPT THE FACT THAT THERE IS A DISPUTE ABOUT THE ISLANDS AND ACCEPT THE STATUS QUO. GAYLER ASKED IF MARCOS WOULD ENVISAGE A TRILATERAL NEGOTIATION. MARCOS SAID IT WAS CONCEIVABLE.

6. COMMENT: MARCOS SEEMS TO BE LAYING GROUNDWORK FOR A DIPLOMATIC EFFORT DESIGNED TO ENHANCE QUALITY OF GOP CLAIMS IN SPRATLY AREA. WHILE HIS EXACT OBJECTIVES ARE NOT CLEAR, IT WOULD SEEM LOGICAL TO CONCLUDE THAT HIS ULTIMATE OBJECTIVES ARE NOT RPT NOT THE SMALL LAND AREAS IN THE SPRATLY GROUP, BUT RATHER THE SEABED AREAS IN THE REED BANK AND OTHER ASSOCIATED REGIONS WHICH MAY HAVE PETROLEUM-BEARING FORMATIONS. WHILE HE WILL NATURALLY TAKE WHATEVER HE CAN GET, IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT HE REALLY

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EXPECTS CHINA TO SHARE ANY OF THE SPRATLYS PER SE WITH EITHER THE PHILIPPINES OR VIETNAM. HIS GAME, THEREFORE, IS APPARENTLY TO ADVANCE CLAIMS TO AS MUCH AS HE CAN CREDIBLY ENCOMPASS, SO THAT HE CAN FALL BACK TO A NORTH SEA TYPE SEABED PARTITION WHICH WILL GIVE HIM SOMETHING WEST OF THE PALAWAN TRENCH.
SULLIVAN

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NNN

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